

National Park Service

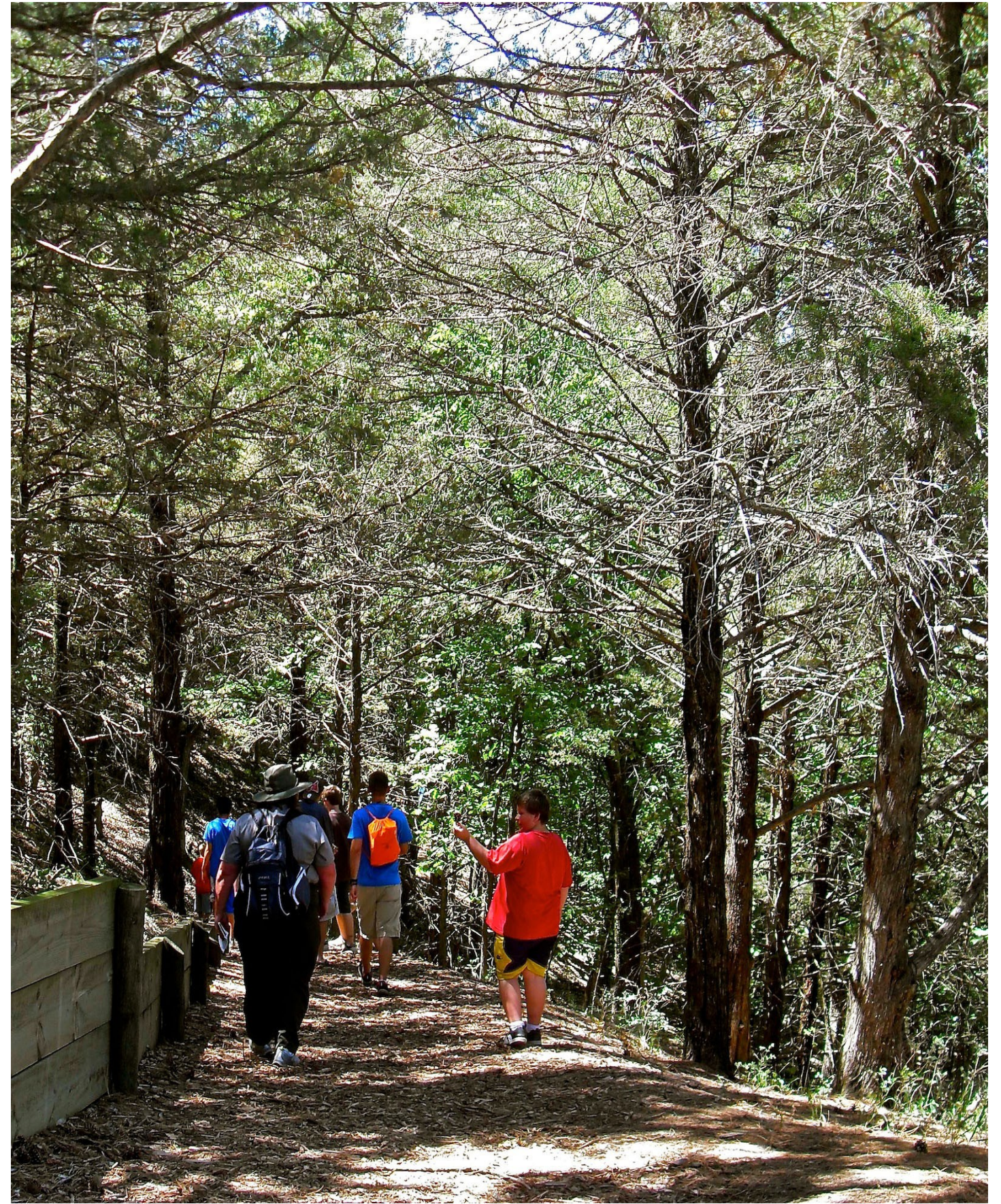


SUPERINTENDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Fiscal Year 2012
(October 1, 2011—September 30, 2012)



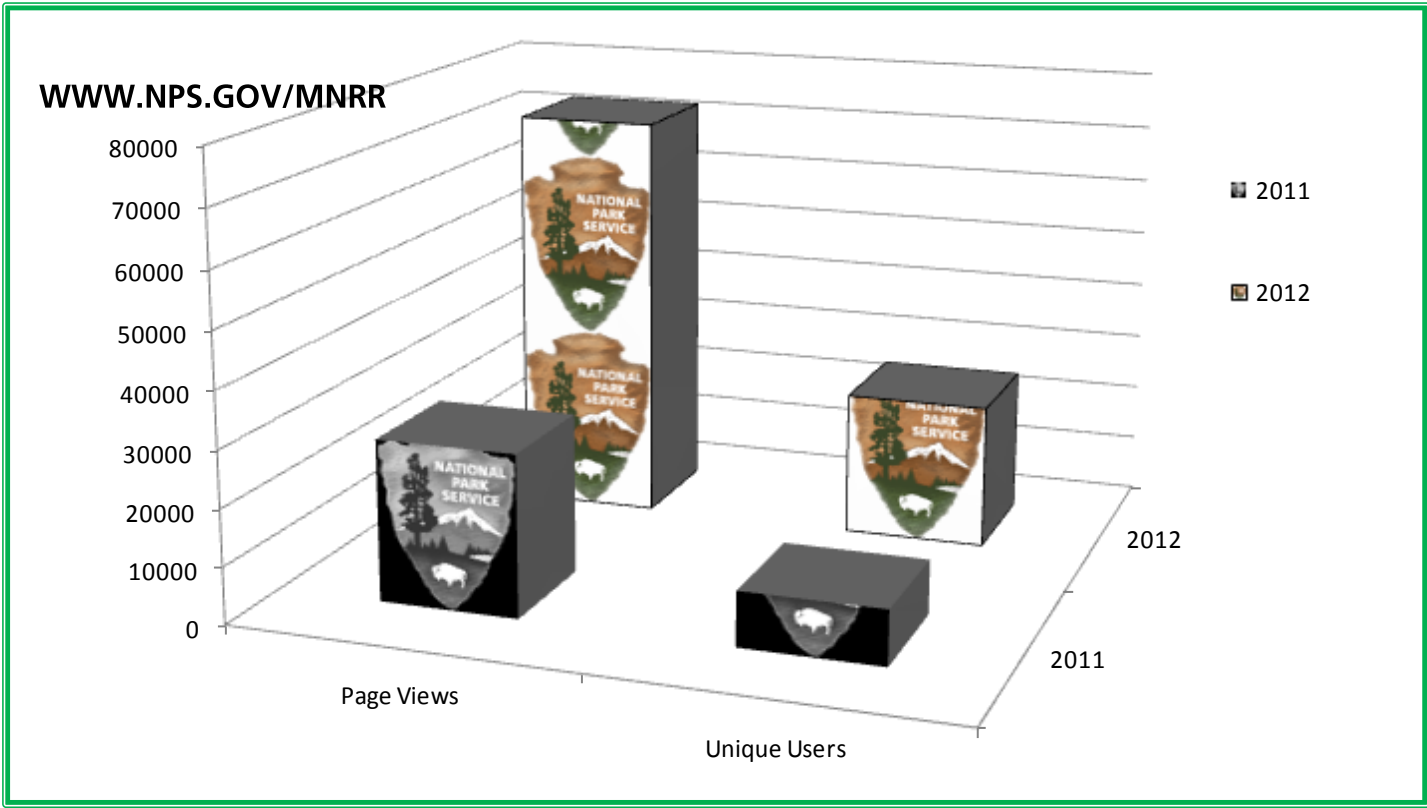
Missouri National Recreational River



Above: TRTs lead a nature hike at South Dakota's Lewis & Clark State Recreation Area.
Back cover: The flood of 2011 produced this seemingly endless series of sandbars.

Appendix - Web Site Statistics

With the development of social media links and the posting of YouTube videos, visitor numbers at NPS.GOV/MNRR increased dramatically in 2012. Page views rose to 72,717 hits, an increase of 155% over 2011 visitation. Unique users rose to 25,519 viewers, 163% over 2011.



Page Views

2011: 28,523
2012: 72,717
Increase +154.9%

Unique Users

2011: 9,691
2012 : 25,519
Increase +163.3%

Social Media Activity

Facebook Friends: 283
Twitter Followers: 225

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Cover photo: Panorama of the Bow Creek Recreation Area.

Facing page: Fishing is just one river activity kids can learn through MNRR ranger programs.



New sandbar habitat between Yankton and Vermilion South Dakota. October 2011.

XI. Conclusion

The Missouri National Recreational River made great strides toward implementing our 5 year goals in 2012. Park staff, working closely with our partners and the 750 river stewards who own land along the river, coordinated activities ranging from public outreach to scientific investigations to meet clean-up and rebuilding after the historic flood of 2011. The future may hold new challenges as a persistent drought now grips the region with different, but just as serious, potential impacts upon park resources and visitors. Despite these external challenges, the park and its staff emerges from this transitional year with much work left underdone, but with a stronger presence in the community and a determination to ensure recovery efforts are focused on long-term goals that will enhance the values for which this Wild and Scenic River was set aside for the enjoyment of the American people over three decades ago.



Riverside residents faced challenging conditions and changed viewsapes during and after the 2011 flood.

I. Superintendent's Office

The Missouri National Recreational River made great strides toward implementing our 5 year goals in 2012 including establishing a friends group, improving recreation opportunities and use, focusing on the 39 mile reach, expanding outreach & branding efforts, creating a community of conservation, and providing excellence in service.

A. Flood Recovery

The historic flood of 2011, where Missouri River flows rose to a peak of 160,000 cfs for several months, impacted park resources in both positive and negative ways. The flood created the largest amount of sandbar habitat for fish and wildlife, including threatened and endangered species, in the post-dam era. Nearly 4,000 acres of sandbar habitat was created for threatened and endangered tern and plover and fishing has been the best in years. National Park Service (NPS) employees are working with other federal and state agencies on strategies to maintain flood-created wildlife habitat while protecting wild and scenic river values.

Work began in earnest to recover from some of the negative impacts to riverside landowners and riverine resources from the flood. The park, working with partners and landowners along the river, coordinated the removal of over 4 tons of trash from the river corridor this year. Several large items (cars/trailers) remain submerged in the river. The park is struggling to find equipment large enough to remove them safely. The NPS completed two post-flood shoreline inventories to document the resource impacts from the flood and voluntary landowner remediation actions. Those efforts will be described in detail in this report.

Public outreach continues to be a major focus of post-flood recovery efforts. Information was disseminated through our website, Facebook, newsletter and public meetings which helped to spread the word about post-flood recovery actions.

B. Stakeholder Boat Tours

The park organized seven boat tours in June to engage congressional and other elected officials in education and discussion of river issues with a group of local landowners, federal, state and local government officials, non-profit environmental interests, recreation, tourism, economic development and other stakeholders.

C. Basin-wide Missouri River Committees

The MNRR represents the NPS on following basin-wide Missouri River Committees:

Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee (MRRIC)

MRRIC consists of 70 members who represent a wide array of local, state, tribal and federal interests throughout the entire basin. MNRR staff actively engaged the Science & Adaptive Management, Federal, Tribal, and Recovery Program MRRIC Work Groups.

Missouri River Basin Interagency Roundtable (MRBIR)

MRBIR is a collaborative forum for federal agency executives. MNRR staff participated on

the Planning and Sediment Management Sub-committees. MNRR leadership in sediment management led to recommendations for changes in dam operations which, if implemented, will enhance park resources.

Missouri River Flood Task Force (MRFTF)

MRFTF is an interagency task force addressing post-flood recovery efforts along Missouri River. MNRR staff contributes to the Floodplain Management and Compliance/Regulatory Work Groups. Regional and other park staff are on the Communication, Tribal, and River Management Work Groups.

The MNRR also provides support and backup to regional staff and other parks on the Missouri River Ecosystem Restoration Plan, Missouri River Natural Resources Committee, Missouri River Annual Operating Plan, Siouxland contingency plan/emergency response and Hyperion groups.

D. Major Park Projects

MNRR staff collaborated with multiple agencies stakeholders to address several major park projects:

Recreational and Economic Development

The Meridian Pedestrian Bridge opened in Yankton this year. A new partnership with City of Yankton allows NPS staff to greet visitors at the Territorial Capitol replica (at base of bridge) and conduct tours on the bridge. The park is working with Nebraska Department of Transportation on the design of flood related repairs to the Discovery Bridge which will include development of a trail from Meridian Bridge to Green Island.

The park initiated a new “Friends of the Missouri National Recreational River” group. Mission and vision statements have been written and a board of directors has been seated. The group will help enhance and improve recreational opportunities with an economic development emphasis. The Friends will help build on the success of the May Events (Education Festival, Clean-up, etc.) through helping facilitate funding and volunteer efforts.

Highway 12 Realignment

Working with Lewis and Clark National Historic Trail, park staff developed quantitative evaluation criteria of scenic impacts of each alternative in the Environmental Impact Statement to protect key viewpoints near Niobrara, Nebraska.

Emergent Sandbar Habitat Program

Worked closely with USACE, USFWS, state and local officials to develop strategies to maintain and enhance emergent sandbar habitat that was created by the flood of 2011 including looking at long-term options to mitigate sediment issues within the Missouri River and its reservoirs.

Land Protection Planning

The NPS completed 5 public scoping meeting and developed draft alternatives for land protection planning process (in conjunction with United States Fish and Wildlife Service) to

X. Safety

This past year represents the largest step forward in MNRR’s safety program with the successful completion of the Operational Leadership course by all staff members. Operational Leadership seeks to empower every employee to be assertive about their safety and that of their coworkers. A key point of Operational Leadership is risk assessment where the likelihood, severity, and consequences of a mishap are taken into account before a task is conducted. At the end of the training, employees were asked to write down their three biggest safety concerns at the park. Those concerns were discussed at a separate safety meeting where two office policies were established and four purchases were made to directly increase the safety of park employees. The Division of Interpretation developed new safety Job Hazard Analysis (JHAs) for guided canoe & kayak trips, informal visitor contacts & installation of wayside exhibits. The Interpretation and Resource Management divisions developed and implemented a Non-Motorized Vessel Plan to improve visitor and staff safety while enhancing the NPS image in river operations.



Resource Management staff at an ATV safety course.



Missouri National Recreational River from Yankton’s Riverside Park.

sion statement and goals have been drafted, a leader has been identified, and board members are being selected. The Friends Group will help the park with special events, outreach, volunteer recruitment and fundraising.

E. City of Yankton

Another significant partnership is with the City of Yankton to staff the Territorial Capitol replica and offer ranger talks at the historic Meridian Bridge, now open for pedestrian and bicycle traffic. An agreement was finalized with the Yankton City Parks and Recreation Department for MNRR interpretive rangers to staff the building and conduct bridge walks on a daily basis Monday through Friday.

F. Local Tourism

Park staff cultivated a new partnership with the “Discover Bon Homme County” tourism group. Two boat tours were given for community leaders along the 39 mile district in order to familiarize them with MNRR resources and issues. This helped the interpretive staff attain a key strategic goal for 2012, to focus greater attention on the 39 mile district. To conclude the year, the interpretive staff joined the Southeast South Dakota tourism group and park staff made a key strategic decision to engage Northeast Nebraska tourism groups in the coming year.



Local tourism leaders learn more about their hometown national park through stakeholder tours.

develop joint conservation areas using Land and Water Conservation Funds. The draft EIS is expected to be released for public review in early 2013.

Bank Stabilization

The flood of 2011 brought an unprecedented amount of un-permitted bank stabilization, mostly broken concrete, to the MNRR. The park developed a balanced approach to post-flood remediation of bank stabilization that protects the scenic values of the river while not unduly burdening river-side landowners. Public meetings with impacted landowners were held in several locations to discuss the NPS policy regarding un-permitted activities that occurred during the flood emergency. MNRR allowed some material outside of the normal standard conditions (for permit approval) in an attempt to prevent undue hardship on landowners or riverside residents who performed “emergency” stabilization. Safety issues, such as rebar in broken concrete, were addressed by working directly with the landowners. Scenic values were preserved through covering with native fieldstone or soil and seed (see photos below). Voluntary compliance to mitigate flood stabilization and restore the natural beauty of the Missouri River is occurring throughout the park.



High flood waters led to increased erosion rates in selected locations. Trash, trees, and other debris eroded into the river, causing visual and ecological impacts to the river and safety concerns for landowners. March 06, 2012, looking downstream. Note white trailer house with brown trim in photos.



Many landowners have taken great efforts to stabilize their banks in accordance with the park’s scenic values. Here landowners have sloped and seeded their banks with approved materials, both protecting their property and adhering to the scenic values of the park. October 30, 2012, looking downstream. Note white trailer house with brown trim in photos.

Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) Report

The park is using principles grounded in the Wild and Scenic River Act to address resource issues in a systematic fashion. Park staff, working with the Denver Service Center, finalized an Outstandingly Remarkable Values (ORV) report that defined each ORV for eight reaches within the park boundary. This report will serve for years to come as a foundation for decision-making regarding resource management within the MNRR. The ORV report is available in hard copy from our Yankton office and the MNRR website.

II. Planning & Regulatory

A. Bank Monitoring Inventory

Work began on the second annual Missouri River Bank Monitoring Inventory with an expected completion date in October. This photographic and GPS inventory will document erosional, depositional and bank stabilization conditions for the 39-mile and 59-mile segments of the MNRR covering 83 miles and 114 miles of total bankline. This inventory will determine if and where new bank stabilization occurs; provide a record the MNRR will use to request the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) to enforce provisions of the Clean Water Act and the Rivers and Harbors Act; and ultimately allow for protection of the Scenic Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORVs) through application of the MNRR Standard Conditions for Bank Stabilization or requests to remove unauthorized stabilization.



Bank at Ponca State Park after 2011 flood.

B. Joint Land Protection Plan

The MNRR and the US Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) published a Notice of Intent, in the Federal Register, to complete detailed planning and associated National Environmental Policy Act documents to consider additional land protection on the Missouri River from Fort Randall Dam to Sioux City, Iowa. Initial public scoping meetings were held in Sioux Falls, Vermillion, Yankton and Wagner, South Dakota, and in Niobrara, Nebraska, in February 2012 to solicit comments for use in the planning process and development of alternatives. Public scoping for this project ended on March 2, 2012.

A Draft Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) is being co-written by the NPS and USFWS for the Ponca Bluffs Conservation Area and National Wildlife Refuge (PBCA) and the Niobrara Confluence Conservation Area and National Wildlife Refuge (NCCA) and is expected to be available for public review in late fall 2012.

C. Regulatory & Compliance

Thirteen Wild and Scenic River Act, Section 7(a) reviews were completed in 2012. MNRR began work on Programmatic Categorical Exclusions for maintenance projects within the park. Compliance was conducted on NPS projects including 5 National Historic Preservation Act, Section 106 reviews, entering 7 projects in Planning, Environment and Public Comment (PEPC), and managing 18 research permits in Research Permit and Reporting System (RPRS).

IX. Partnerships

The park's bond to the local community continued to grow with many new and expanding partnerships.

A. MNRR Water Trail

Phase I of the park's water trail, in cooperation with several federal, state, and local agencies, was completed and expanded in 2012. Phase I of the trail included 14 water trail access point signs, which were designed in 2011 and installed in 2012.

For phase II of the trail, 13 access point signs were designed in 2012 and are ready for installation in 2013.

Three Water Trail events were held in 2012, two small events (10-15 participants) led by the park and another large group event (57 participants). Also, in 2012, the Water Trail conducted digital outreach with an expanded website and a new Facebook page.



MNRR Resource Management staff install Water Trail sign at the Mulberry Bend boat ramp, operated by Nebraska Game & Parks Commission.

B. VIP Program

The Volunteer-In-Parks (VIP) program had several highlights that made 2012 another successful year. There were over 231 VIPs logging 1097 volunteer hours. Among their many notable accomplishments:

- Assisting in the clearance of three and a half tons of trash and debris from the MNRR during the annual Missouri River Cleanup.
- Working the Missouri River Watershed Festival for the 11th consecutive year where they led hundreds of schoolchildren through educational stations.
- Making informal visitor contacts and staffing the Territorial Capitol and front desk at the Lewis and Clark Visitor Center at Gavins Point Dam.
- Collection of trash and debris at the Earth Day cleanup at Mulberry Bend overlook and boat ramp.



Annual river cleanup drew over 100 volunteers

C. Partners to Enhance Stewardship

The park continued its partnership with the Northeast Nebraska Cooperative Weed Management Area and the Natural Resource Conservation Service. As a result, two projects were conducted in cooperation with four counties and the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission to remove 246 invasive salt cedar plants.

D. Friends of the MNRR

An important achievement in partnerships was the establishment of a Friends Group. A mis-

and general design. Purchased essential utility items for unit.

B. Territorial Capitol & Meridian Bridge

MNRR's Division of Interpretation partnered with the city of Yankton during the summer of 2012 to staff the Territorial Capitol and provide interpretation on the historic Meridian Bridge. From Monday through Friday from May 29th through August 25th, seasonal rangers staffed the Dakota Territorial Capitol replica. They greeted visitors, offered information about the MNRR and explained the historical significance of the Yankton riverfront. At 11:30, 12:30, and 3:00, ranger led interpretive walks were given on the Meridian Bridge. These talks focused on the where, why and what of the MNRR. Each talk introduced the 59 mile district of the MNRR as a Wild and Scenic River and the special ecological and historical significance of the river.



TRT ready to greet visitors at the historic Meridian Bridge

In addition, on weekends, the park's Teacher Ranger Teacher staff set up the MNRR popup shelter beside the bridge. They offered Junior Ranger activities, a variety of brochures and created awareness with hundreds of visitors who learned about eastern South Dakota's and northeast Nebraska's only National Park.

By season's end 1,300 informal visitor contacts had been made during ranger roves on the bridge and in the adjoining city park, 26 Interpretive Talks were given on the bridge and 365 visitors were greeted at the Territorial Capitol.



Teacher-Ranger-Teachers present a program on the MNRR and its endangered species at a school on the Santee Sioux Reservation.

III. Administration

A. Human Resources

MNRR had five returning seasonal employees, including two diversity candidates from the Midwest Region Student Academy program. There were an additional six seasonals hired for the interpretation and resource management divisions. The park hired three Teacher-Ranger-Teacher program participants. A new Chief of Interpretation, Education and Outreach was hired and began work on October 24, 2011. The Chief of Resource Management, Gia Wagner, transferred to Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore in late July.

IV. Maintenance, Facility Management and Development

A. Boat Ramp and Overlook Maintenance

In 2012 the park continued maintenance work at the Mulberry Bend Boat Ramp through an agreement with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission and began maintenance at Clay County Park and Myron Grove Boat Ramps through an agreement with the South Dakota Game Fish and Parks Department. New garbage cans were placed at Mulberry Bend boat ramp and Bow Creek Recreation Area which has reduced the amount of littering at these locations.

Maintenance work also continued at the Mulberry Bend Overlook including the repair of unsightly volunteer trails which were causing added erosion between the switch backs on the concrete path. The trails were dug up, seeded with native species, and covered with erosion control mat. So far the lack of rain has hindered seed germination but visitors have stayed off the trails and some native species are coming up through the matting.



Revegetating eroded volunteer trails at Mulberry Bend Overlook.

A cooperative effort between the local Izaak Walton League, USACE, and MNRR resulted in the placement of three fishing line recycling receptacles at the Gavins Point spillway area. The area has some of the highest numbers of shore fishermen and unfortunately the highest amount of dumped fishing line. These recycling containers will help lessen the amount of waste fishing line entering the river.

B. Signage

This year numerous wayside exhibits and signs were installed or replaced by Natural Resource and Interpretive seasonal and full time staff. During 2011 interpretive wayside exhibits were replaced along the MNRR that were damaged by weather, age, or the flood of 2011. There were 21 exhibits replaced because of such damages. On the MNRR Bow Creek Recreation Area property, 3 wayside exhibit and park signs were replaced due to vandalism. Additional park policy signs were purchased for Bow Creek Recreation Area in the event of future vandalism.



New sign at Bow Creek Recreation Area

In 2012, 14 new signs were designed and installed along the MNRR. Nine of these signs were MNRR River Access signs. Each of these signs were placed at river access points and installed to be viewed from the river. They give access name, river mile and amenities. The remaining 5 signs were “Entering” and “Leaving Missouri National Recreational River” signs. These signs were installed at points where visitors on the Missouri River would know when they were entering or exiting the National Park.

This year also marked the completion and installation of the 59 mile MNRR Water Trail signs. There were 9 of these signs installed at Missouri River access points; each sign corresponds with the MNRR Water Trail web site information. Phase II signs for the 39 mile were developed in FY 2012 and will be installed in FY 2013.

C. Mulberry Bend Back Country Trail

A back country trail plan has been developed for the Mulberry Bend property. The proposed trail would enter the wooded portion of the property. This is east of the existing trail near the last vista point. The trail would be roughly a one mile loop with two spur trails that would end at vista points overlooking the river. Once the trail is approved by cultural resource specialists, work will begin next summer.



Panoramic view from Mulberry Bend Overlook

VIII. Interpretation & Education

A. Programming, Exhibits, Visitor Satisfaction & Junior Rangers

The MNRR Division of Interpretation had a successful year in 2012. Multiple new programs and events helped build awareness of the MNRR's natural and cultural resources.

Among the many notable achievements:

- During FY2012 MNRR Interpretive staff conducted a total of 1,121 formal, informal and Junior Ranger programs at partner sites, special events, schools, and other sites for a total of 7,472 visitor contacts.
- Presented in-school programs introducing the MNRR to over 800 students in the Vermillion and Yankton School Districts.
- Staffed the Territorial Capitol at Riverside Park on weekdays throughout the summer and conducted 26 interpretive walking tours of the Meridian Bridge to connect visitors to the MNRR.
- Conducted multiple special events including: Missouri River Education Festival, Missouri River Cleanup, Water Safety Day, Families on the River Day, Let's Move Outside Day, MNRR at the 4th of July Fireworks, MNRR at Riverboat Days, and contacted a record number of visitors while participating in Ponca State Park's Missouri River Outdoor Expo.
- The Teacher-Ranger-Teacher (TRT) program continued with 12 summer reading programs for over 300 students at libraries and schools throughout the corridor.
- Presented the usual wide variety of programs and activities at partner sites throughout the corridor.
- Developed nine educational podcasts covering a range of topics about the MNRR's natural and cultural resources. Developed YouTube channel “MNRR Presents.”
- Developed MNRR Facebook page and Twitter account.
- Totally revamped the MNRR website, including the addition of social media and YouTube links, substantially improving MNRR's web presence. 143% increase in usage (*See appendix D*).
- Integrated newsletter with Division of Resource Management.
- Installed official park signage at MNRR headquarters and throughout the park corridor.
- Produced six new MNRR Outstandingly Remarkable Values banners for display in the Territorial Capitol and two “Ranger tour” signs.
- Conducted multiple canoe clinics at Lake Yankton which were very well attended. Provided interpretation for Missouri River Institute paddle events from Myron Grove to Mulberry Bend.
- Purchased trailer for Mobile Ranger Station. Completed layout



Living history programs are popular with visitors



MNRR ranger-led paddle programs provided interpretation for paddlers at Gunder-son backwater

VII. Branding & Outreach

The MNRR Division of Interpretation successfully implemented a branding and outreach program throughout the park corridor during 2012. Multiple divisions participated in a multi-pronged strategy to increase awareness of the park through media contacts and special events. Press releases announcing interpretive programs and special events were sent out on a weekly basis throughout the summer season. As a result, the park’s staff and programs were featured several times on the front page of the Yankton Press and Dakotan.

MNRR events were also featured on regional television news. Sioux Falls featured the Earth Day Cleanup event at Mulberry Bend followed by a ranger interview in Sioux City for the annual Missouri River Cleanup. The park was also showcased on local radio station WNAX in Yankton announcing special events. Each of the aforementioned media outlets broadcast the MNRR as "Eastern South Dakota's only National Park." This key branding message identifies the park as a nationally significant resource.



Nebraska Game & Parks presenter introduces students to the endangered pallid sturgeon at the 2012 Education Festival.

Articles concerning the park were also published in the Springfield, Wagner, Mitchell, and Avon newspapers during the year. These communities are in close proximity to the 39 mile district, the focus of one of MNRR’s goals. As a result of these efforts, roving rangers have noted a greatly increased local awareness of the MNRR and the NPS presence.

Special presentations were made for the following organizations and events:

Missouri River Education Festival	Sertoma Club
Missouri River Symposium	Kiwanis Club
Discover Bon Homme County Tourism	Missouri River Institute
Missouri River Natural Resources Committee	Yankton Community Forum
Mount Marty College—Women in Science	University of South Dakota
Nebraska Historical Society—Ponca lecture series	Clay County Park open house
Least Tern Research Symposium	South Dakota Kayak Challenge
Missouri River Bank Stabilization Association	Yankton Antique Auto Club
Ponca State Park Kids’ Day	Dakota Territorial Museum
National Travel Writers’ Association	Yankton Riverboat Days
Ponca State Park Outdoor Expo	Avera Assisted Living
Lewis & Clark Boy Scout Camp	Yankton Boys and Girls Club

V. Resource Stewardship

A. Monitoring Species of Concern

The park monitors three species of concern, including the federally endangered least tern, the federally threatened piping plover, and the formerly federally listed bald eagle. There are a total of 67 known bald eagle nests within and adjacent to the MNRR, including current and former ones, both active and inactive nests, from 2000 to 2012. In 2012, 31 nests were considered to be active (adult seen on or directly adjacent to a nest). Eleven new nests were reported in 2012.



Three juvenile bald eagles

Least tern and piping plover monitoring on the lower Niobrara River in 2012 was marked by low quality habitat and below average adult census numbers. However, nest success and productivity were high.

Turtle monitoring was also completed in 2012 in cooperation with the Nebraska Game and Parks Commission. Approximately 50 miles of the park were sampled using specialized hoop nets. Five different species were sampled and all specimens (n=172) were Passive Integrated Transponder (PIT) tagged for future surveys.



MNRR biology technicians remove a false map turtle from a hoop net

B. Water

Water Quality

The park began a pilot water quality program to assess the water quality of tributaries of the MNRR. Twenty-six tributaries within the Missouri River watershed and ten tributaries within the Niobrara River watershed were sampled one to three times. Basic water quality parameters were measured at each site one to three times throughout the summer season. The parameters measured included dissolved oxygen, total suspended sediment, conductivity, temperature, pH, and salinity. A total of 13 tributaries became dry because of the extreme drought.

Water Rights

MNRR in conjunction with NIOB objected to water right applications within the Niobrara River basin to protect and enhance the Outstandingly Remarkable Values, free-flowing condition and water quality of the Niobrara River segments designated under the Wild and Scenic River Act. A total of 5 applications had objections filed with Nebraska Department of Natural Resources.

C. Shoreline Monitoring

A new shoreline monitoring protocol was developed in 2012 from the Missouri River Institute protocol of 2011. The annual monitoring program includes continuous photos along the park’s 98 miles of the Missouri River. Photos will document current status regarding bank condition

(stabilized or not stabilized, bank type, etc) and will document large and small scale changes over time.

D. Landscape Monitoring

The park’s landscape monitoring program consists of permanent photo points at park properties, including Mulberry Bend Overlook and Bow Creek Recreation Area. Photos are taken yearly to track change, such as fire response, human development and other changes in vegetation. This year’s photos add to a four year photo point database for both park properties.



Creating a photo inventory of bank conditions

E. Exotic Plant Management Team

The Northern Great Plains Exotic Plant Management Team (EPMT) visited the park for two weeks this summer. During the week of June 4, two EPMT employees assisted by 5 members of the Rochester Minnesota Conservation Corp (MCC) controlled thistles, such as Canada, musk, and plumeless thistles, Buckthorn and eastern red cedar. The crew covered more than 60 acres of Bow Creek Recreation Area searching for and treating any exotic thistles and buckthorn. A search for buckthorn at Mulberry Bend Overlook resulted in the control of more than a dozen individual plants, signaling that the infestation in that area was higher than originally thought. In the last two days of the June trip the EPMT crew cleared an acre of invasive cedar trees at Mulberry Bend. All of the trees were carried off site so there will be no need to burn piles at this site in the future. During the week of August 27, two different EPMT employees and the Killen Woods MCC crew worked hard in blazing heat to clear two acres of cedar trees on Green Island. Daily work hours were shortened due to 100°+ days, one day the temperature reached 100° F by noon! The EPMT work is in addition to treatment conducted by park staff which sprayed an additional 8 acres of Canada thistle, 1.2 acres of leafy spurge, and .1 acre of purple loosestrife.



EPMT cutting cedar trees on Green Island

F. Prescribed Fire

April 11 marked the second prescribed fire in MNRR history. The 25 acre burn occurred at Bow Creek Recreation Area in a native grass planting being overrun by woody species such as Siberian elm and eastern red cedar and Canada thistle. The fire destroyed most of the woody encroachment and the reduction in standing biomass resulted in better control of this-tle with chemical applications. In addition to the resource goals being met, the fire was also a success of intra- and inter-agency cooperation. The bulk of the 12 man fire crew was



Prescribed burn at Bow Creek Recreation Area

MNRR, Knox, Cedar, Dixon, Yankton, Clay, and Union counties have agreed to dispatch for NPS rangers and have done so throughout the summer season on informal agreements through the county sheriffs.

Yankton County has proven to be the most efficient dispatch center; dispatchers from Yankton County and City (located in the same center) have been cooperative in running registration searches and providing print outs for information when needed by NPS rangers. The Yankton law enforcement dispatch channel is programmed in the Cedar County portable radio. When NPS digital radios become available, Branum recommends NPS look to dispatch primarily through Yankton on the Turkey Ridge INT frequency and with NE patrol on the state radio systems mentioned below. MNRR has purchased several Motorola XTS5000R portable radios that will be compatible with the SD and NE state wide radio systems. These state radio systems would give NPS direct contact with dispatch in many areas through the use of the Turkey Ridge INT and Vermillion INT frequencies in SD but the capabilities of the NE system is yet to be known. However, both states have indicated permission and cooperation in helping NPS get set up on the state radio systems when NPS equipment becomes available. The local county frequencies currently being utilized on the Cedar County Emergency Management radio on loan from Garvin should also be included in the NPS radios to supplement the state frequencies. NIOB may have several XTL5000 mobile radios available for installation in vehicles or boats that are also compatible with the state systems. They may require a software update to allow for digital “trunking” Mobile radios are much more powerful and would provide for much better radio coverage within the MNRR boundary.



Prohibited personal watercraft operation.

VI. Resource & Visitor Protection

The park consists of over 100 miles of non-contiguous rivers and creeks running through two states, nine counties, and an Indian reservation. All of these entities have primary jurisdiction, as well as the federal government through the Army Corps of Engineers, the US Coast Guard, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. NPS Law Enforcement Officer Andrew Branum continued to build good relationships with these agencies, counties, and states, and cooperated with officers from several jurisdictions to deter violations on the MNRR.

A. Law Enforcement Pilot Program

Niobrara National Scenic River provided permanent ranger Andrew Branum for assistance during busy weekends this summer season. NIOB completed an Incident Action Plan in coordination with the MNRR Superintendent. The plan focused on illegal jet ski and air boat usage, boating under the influence, ATV use in endangered species habitat and NPS property, and illegal interference and equipment violation on public land in the river valley; including on NPS properties. Extensive violations were found in all areas. Additionally, NIOB detailed in a seasonal from Badlands National Park (BADL) in order to provide a patrol partner to assist Branum.

B. Patrols & Investigations

Many river and road patrols were done within the MNRR boundary by Branum while partnered with Tyson Nehring, a seasonal protection ranger from BADL, Ranger Jeff Jones of Nebraska Game and Parks, Deputy Craig Hanson of Cedar County, and members of NE state patrol, SD Game Fish and Parks (NG&P), and Dixon County deputy Don Taylor. Significant events during NPS patrols included a boat pursuit by Branum and NG&P of fleeing personal watercraft users, citations for minor in possession of alcohol, warning notices to PWC users within the NPS boundary, confiscation of trapping equipment left unattended on NPS land, and warnings and education provided on the use of ATVs in endangered species habitat in various locations on the river. Game cameras and field observations were used to provide more information about vandalism, hunting, trespass, and ATV issues at the Bow Creek Recreation Area. Officer Branum also assisted with several routine recoveries during a kayak race, and filed reports remotely from NIOB regarding several deaths in the MNRR. Reports are currently maintained in the NIOB Critical Incident Report log at NIOB.



Law enforcement rangers on river patrol

C. Communications

Branum has worked significantly with Kevin Garvin of Cedar County Emergency Management in order to solve communications issues for NPS protection staff. Garvin has loaned MNRR a portable radio that is able to communicate with dispatch in many of the counties within the MNRR boundary. Currently, with the limited patrols and low amount of radio traffic coming out of

made up of the Buffalo Wildland Fire module, but two firefighters from Wind Cave National Park and one from MNRR assisted, and also a fire engine and two BIA fire fighters from a local tribe assisted. Without the local tribe and their fire engine, the fire could not have happened.

G. Monitoring Post Flood Impacts on NPS Properties

The lower floodplain area (60 acres) of Bow Creek Recreational Area was innudated for over 3 months during the Missouri River flood of 2011. Restoration of the property has been “natural”; observing changes, spraying noxious weeds, and monitoring the natural restoration of the property after the flood.

H. Cultural

The Missouri River flood of 2011 caused significant channel and sediment movement. Many bones and other potentially significant cultural items were deposited on newly created sandbars, islands, and private property when the flow from Gavins Point Dam was stopped for maintenance. Legal authority to protect non-NPS resources on lands within with the park boundary were explored. Future law enforcement may include a regional team to coordinate enforcement actions.

Boat tours were given by park staff to Ponca, Santee and Yanktonai Sioux tribal leaders as part of an ethnographic study being done on the Missouri River watershed.



Steamboat wreckage,, possibly the Western, which was crushed by ice in 1881.

SD GF&P photo